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Challenges & Opportunities

Annual Report 2001

THE PREMIER'S COUNCIL
ON THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

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ON THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Rick Hansen
Honourary Chairperson

November 1, 2001

The Honourable Ralph Klein
Premier of Alberta
307 Legislature Building
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2B6

Dear Honourable Premier:

I have the honour to present the twelfth Annual Report of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. This report covers the activities undertaken by your Council during the fiscal year ending March 31, 2001. It is submitted in accordance with the provision of s.7(1) of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities Act for your presentation to the Legislative Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

Rob Lougheed

Rob Lougheed
Chair, Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities
MLA, Clover Bar - Fort Saskatchewan

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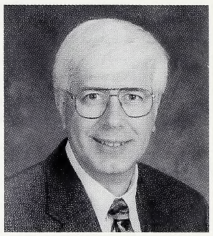
Message from the Chair



The title of our annual report, *Challenges and Opportunities*, accurately captures the backdrop for the work of the Premier's Council during the past year. The challenges are not new—accessible transportation, affordable housing, financial supports, and others. However, our opportunity is new—an increasing commitment for collaboration between community stakeholders and the Premier's Council in the continued development of the Alberta Disability Strategy.

The legislated mandate of the Premier's Council provides this province with a unique conduit between Alberta's disability community and government. My dual roles as chair of the Council and MLA for Clover Bar – Fort Saskatchewan have provided me with my own unique platform. I have been challenged to effectively represent the diversity of concerns expressed by my constituents and also provide the necessary leadership to effectively represent the issues and concerns expressed by Alberta's disability community—a disability community that represents 17% of our provincial population and more than 30% of the Aboriginal population.

The message from Alberta's disability community remains clear—their needs are well known; their call for action has been well discussed. The Alberta Disability Strategy—the Premier's Council's top priority—attempts to capture the essence of this historical knowledge and translate it into recommendations for responsive future strategies that reflect the desires of the disability community while recognizing government roles and responsibilities.

The collective wisdom of the members selected to the Premier's Council has provided Alberta with a unique spectrum of knowledge, skills and experiences. Council members have insisted that our future direction be driven by expressed desires of Alberta's disability community and communicated in a manner that reflects our mission—*to champion significant improvements in the status of persons with disabilities.*

I would like to thank all Council members for their commitment and dedication. As they approach the conclusion of their three-year term, the challenges are great. The opportunities, however, are even greater. As we continue to fulfill our three core businesses—Policy Development, Advocacy, and Evaluation, the Premier's Council—with the support of its secretariat—will continue to pursue its vision by calling upon the collective wisdom of its members and the disability community in Alberta.

Sincerely

Rob Lougheed

Rob Lougheed

Historical Perspective

The Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities was re-appointed, with a five-year mandate, in the fall of 1998. This extension was announced after an extensive external consultative process that involved key stakeholders in the review of the mandate, performance and future roles for the Council.

The first task of the re-appointed Council was to seek further input and advice from stakeholders on priorities to be addressed. All the information was brought together at a strategic planning workshop that involved the entire Council and secretariat staff in April 1999. The result was a document titled *Strategic Direction*, which summarized our mission, core businesses, positioning, vision, strategic priorities and outcomes to be pursued. Feedback was then solicited from the stakeholders that were involved earlier in the process. Our three year business plan is simply a summary of what we learned in the process.

While the three year business plan identifies priorities on a number of fronts for the Council, it emphasizes the need for a coordinated approach for disability supports and policy in our province—an Alberta Disability Strategy. Having just completed the third year of this mandate in 2000—2001, the Premier's Council continued to facilitate the creation of the Alberta Disability Strategy, its top priority as determined through extensive consultations with stakeholders in the disability community throughout Alberta.

Reflecting the Needs of Albertans

The Premier's Council regularly reviews the visions, goals and aspirations of the many organizations that form Alberta's disability community. We join with these representative groups in the collective pursuit of equal citizenship and full access to opportunity for persons with disabilities. Full status is the goal, implying full inclusion and participation in the social, economic and political life of Alberta communities.

Together we strive for increased understanding, a level playing field, and the support for basic safety and security needs and for a standard of living and quality of life that promotes well being for all. We believe that persons with disabilities are entitled to equal rights, freedoms, and responsibility for making positive choices towards determining their own destinies.

The Council recognizes that our vision must support the organizations of and for persons with disabilities that form Alberta's disability community. Through an extensive consultative process with these organizations, and by summarizing their collective vision, the Council arrived at the vision contained on the next page. We are committed to seeing the vision become the reality in Alberta—and we believe that Alberta can become the model for all of Canada.

Vision 2005

Premier's Council will be widely recognized and respected:

- as the **CATALYST** or change agent that helped make the visions of the disability community become Alberta's reality
- as a **POWERFUL VOICE** with a legislated mandate accountable to all Albertans with disabilities – in a Province where persons with disabilities are increasingly seen as the real experts capable of identifying and addressing their own needs and goals
- with an ongoing **LEADERSHIP MANDATE** in the evolution of policy, advocacy and evaluation – our role changing as goals are accomplished, communities are empowered and self-advocacy becomes the norm
- for **SETTING THE STANDARDS** and influencing the Province of Alberta to achieve cutting edge policies, legislation, standards and behaviors related to disability issues

In the process of achieving this vision, we will become a model for other provinces.

2000 - 2001 Highlights

The Premier's Council continues to focus on issues of common interest to all persons with disabilities; inform key stakeholders; and provide opportunities for constructive debate and generating positive results in the form of collective recommendations. The Council must also continue to be positioned to deliver such recommendations effectively, given its unique mandate to advise and influence government. To be effective, the Council must place a priority on creating effective strategic alliances.

Mission

To champion significant improvements in the status of Albertans with disabilities

Core Business

The Premier's Council's three core business areas are all brought to bear on each opportunity to improve the status of persons with disabilities:

Policy Development: Contributing to the development of public sector legislation, policies, outcomes and targets pertaining to the needs of persons with disabilities, reporting progress towards outcomes and facilitating co-ordination of related programs and services.

Advocacy: Informing and influencing key decision-makers on issues of interest to persons with disabilities; addressing and reducing systemic barriers that impede the rights and opportunities of Albertans with disabilities.

Evaluation: Developing standards for and monitoring the performance of the support system for Albertans with disabilities, and recommending systemic improvement.

Strategic Priorities

The strategic priorities of the Premier's Council are reflective of our core business areas and are further identified through our following goals and actions:

- Bridge Building
- Image, Profile And Communications
- Regionalization
- Provincial Business Planning
- Integration—Big Picture Policy

Goal 1: Bridge Building

To develop strong partnerships, strategic alliances, and working relationships in pursuit of our mission.

Council represented on:

- Alberta Disabilities Forum
- Ministers EmployAbility Council
- Advisory Committee on Barrier-Free Transportation
- Employment Supports for Persons with Disabilities (ESPD)
- Special Education Review Committee
- Interdepartmental Committee on Alternative Communications Services
- City of Edmonton Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities
- Interdepartmental Employability Assistance for Persons with Disabilities (EAPD)
- Alberta Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health
- Persons With Developmental Disabilities Provincial Board
- Aboriginal Policy Initiative Interdepartmental Committee
- Edmonton Employment Partnership (EmployAbilities, CPA Alberta, Goodwill Industries)
- Interdepartmental Committee on Employability Supports for Persons with Disabilities.
- Alberta Partnership on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

Council contributed to review processes:

- Special Education Policy
- Blind Persons Rights Act Review
- Unconditional Municipal Grant Process
- Alberta Aides To Daily Living Review
- Canadian Transportation Agency: Mediation Pilot Project Review
- Accessible Taxi Review Committee
- Parking Placards Review Committee

Goal 2: Image /Profile and Communications

To build awareness of the Council and its work and to ensure those messages are consistent and have impact.

Council participated in:

- Focus On What Works—Employment Forum
- Focus Group: Transportation Needs of Persons With Disabilities
- PDD Symposium—Accessible Transportation
- Ma'mowe Capital Region, Child and Family Services Authority Public Board Meeting
- Persons With Developmental Disabilities Central Alberta Community Board Meeting
- Disability and Children's Services: Calgary Rocky View Child and Family Services Teaching Seminar
- National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation
- City of Edmonton Community Dialogue
- International Seminar for North American Consortium for Disability Services and Human Resources
- Biennial Canadian Deaf Festival
- First National Family Conference
- Champions of Workplace Diversity Consortium.

Goal 3: Regionalization

To ensure that disability issues are fully addressed in the business plans of regional authorities.

Council participated In:

- Regional Health Authority Joint Business Planning Committee

Council networked with:

- Persons With Developmental Disabilities Provincial and Regional Boards
- Children's Authorities

Goal 4: Provincial Business Plans

To ensure that all provincial ministries understand and accept their key role in improving the status of persons with disabilities.

Council created linkages with:

- Alberta Health and Wellness
- Alberta Infrastructure
- Persons With Developmental Disabilities Provincial and Regional Boards
- Children's Authorities
- Alberta Learning
- Aboriginal Affairs
- Community Development

Goal 5: Integration – Big Picture Policy

Develop an Alberta Disability Strategy, clarifying the commitment of the provincial government to ' In Unison' and endorsing the values and principles of the disability community, to provide an overall umbrella policy to guide all provincial departments and agencies.

Note: Although the Alberta Disability Strategy is specifically referred to under Goal #5, it is in essence the framework through which we address the preceding four goals.

Council Completed Publications and Research:

- Draft of a Disability Lens that will assist mainstream government programs to assess how their activities will affect people with disabilities.
- Draft of Status Tool (Performance Outcomes, Measures, and Indicators Project)
- Draft of Inventory of Programs and Services for Persons with Disabilities
- Draft of a program audit tool to assess disability program against common standards.

The Opportunity:

Alberta Disability Strategy – Our #1 Priority

As with the collective goal of the disability community, the Premier's Council's ultimate goal is Full Citizenship—equal access for Albertans with disabilities to all our province has to offer. Consistent with the federal approach, we know that, in order to achieve Full Citizenship, we need to focus on the areas of Employment, Personal Supports and Financial Supports. However, the Premier's Council believes that Education/Learning is a crucial step towards Full Citizenship and Alberta faces particular challenges in this area. As a result, it is not sufficient to study education solely in the context of employment. Under the Alberta Disability Strategy, it is a building block unto itself.

Leadership, Direction and Coordination

The continuing process of developing and implementing the Alberta Disability Strategy requires the full involvement and support from the disability community, provincial staff at the program and policy level, and the key Ministers involved in providing programs and services most important to Albertans with disabilities. The Premier's Council continued to provide the necessary leadership, direction and coordination of the Alberta Disability Strategy through five Committees each represented by a Council member as Chair:

- Full Citizenship: Anne Belohorec, Chair
- Personal Supports: Jim Killick, Chair
- Financial Supports: Gerald Gordey, Chair
- Education/Learning: Gordon Bullivant, Chair
- Employment: Margaret MacCabe, Chair

The Premier's Council is greatly concerned about the very high rate of disability within the aboriginal community (30% compared to the Alberta average of 17%). Accordingly, the Premier's Council has established the Aboriginal Advisory Committee to provide input to the Coordinating Committee, of which Council member Carrielynn Lamouche is Chair.

Together, the Chairs comprised the Alberta Disability Strategy Coordinating Committee, which liaises with the other Council members and provides direction to the secretariat of the Premier's Council in the continuous development of the strategy.

As highlighted in its Vision 2005, the Council strives to be respected and recognized as the catalyst or change agent that helped make the visions of the disability community become Alberta's reality. In keeping with this vision, on January 28, 2000 the Premier's Council reviewed the objectives and policy directions of *In Unison* and evaluated how well Alberta is doing in each of the four areas of Full Citizenship, Personal Supports, Financial Supports, Employment Supports, Education/Learning. The Premier's Council, through its established committees conducted a series of focus groups to receive continuing feedback from Alberta's disability community.

The Alberta Disability Strategy will provide direction to champion significant improvements in the status of persons with disabilities. The goal is full citizenship, with the four areas of education, employment, financial supports and personal supports seen as the necessary building blocks. Years of consultation have confirmed specific targets that people with disabilities believe important to achieve. Most recent extensive consultation and exhaustive analyses of provincial disability organizations' outcome statements, stakeholders have consistently identified the following list of indicators to represent the status of persons with disabilities:

- Comparison of workforce participation rates of persons with disabilities (employment rates, unemployment rates, % in full time/part time, % in self-employment, etc.).
- Comparison of education levels of persons with and without disabilities.
- % of children/families requiring special education support and adaptive technology/equipment that are satisfied with current arrangements.
- Level of participation of persons with disabilities in public policy processes.
- % of persons with disabilities satisfied with opportunities to participate in community-based recreation, arts, culture and active living.
- % of persons with disabilities requiring special or accessible transportation that are satisfied with the service in their community.
- % of persons with disabilities requiring affordable, accessible housing that are able to obtain it.
- % of persons with disabilities requiring financial support that are satisfied that they are able to live in dignity—% of Albertans with disabilities living below the poverty line.
- % of persons with disabilities satisfied with health care support they have access to/receive.
- % of persons with disabilities requiring help with housework and household chores that are satisfied with the help they are receiving.
- % of persons with disabilities who require technical aides, devices or special equipment that feel they have been able to access appropriate disability supports.

While not formally finalized, the Council believes these targets represent the most pressing problem areas needing resolution through an Alberta Disability Strategy.

The Alberta Disability Strategy will include recommendations that will provide provincial departments and community stakeholders with policy directions and objectives that will enhance Full Citizenship for persons with disabilities.

Thus, while the Premier's Council recognizes the difficulty in measuring progress that ties directly to the desired outcomes and recommendations that will appear in the Alberta Disability Strategy, we do have an opportunity to create a regular reporting mechanism. Such a report will communicate to provincial decision-makers how individuals and families are currently coping in our communities given the current level of existing supports.

Council Members

Rob Lougheed is the MLA for Clover Bar – Fort Saskatchewan. He has degrees in Education and Science and over 28 years of experience as an Alberta educator. In addition to his position as Chair and MLA, Rob currently serves as a member of Alberta Government committees.

Anne Belohorec of Sherwood Park is a registered nurse, and has extensive experience working with issues surrounding multiple sclerosis. She also speaks on health and wellness issues. This is Anne's second term with the Premier's Council.

Gordon Bullivant of Calgary is the Executive Director of the Foothills Academy, a centre for children with learning disabilities, and has been active in the special needs community for over 30 years. He is a member of the Calgary Stakeholders Group for Learning Disabilities and has represents the Council in issues of Special Education.

Shirley Dupmeier of Medicine Hat has extensive experience working with issues surrounding visual impairment and other disabilities, and is a liaison with many disability organizations in Medicine Hat. This is her second term with the Council.

Andrea Fugeman Millar of Millarville is a presiding Justice of the Peace within the Criminal Justice System, the Director of the Provincial Learning Disabilities Association, and a national legal advisor for the Canadian Learning Disabilities Association.

Gerald Gordey of Vegreville has a long history of community involvement and has contributed to many disability organizations as an advisor and volunteer. Gordon has been a County Councillor, school board Chair, representative of the Vegreville Health Unit board, and advisory member of a voluntary hospital board.

Judy Hellevang of Calgary has been associated with the Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre of Calgary (DDRC) for 18 years. She sits on an Advisory Committee to the DDRC's Board of Directors, made up of people with developmental disabilities. Judy has been an advocate for many people with disabilities, and continues to promote their rights.

Jim Killick of St. Albert has been actively involved in the field of community rehabilitation in Alberta for approximately 20 years in the areas of counselling, program development, and administration. Until recently, he was the Executive Director of the Easter Seal Ability Council, and has been involved as a participant in numerous community volunteer associations.

Carrielynn Lamouche of Gift Lake is a member of the Gift Lake Metis Settlement and has worked for a number of years with the Metis Settlement's General Council and with the provincial and federal governments in the area of social programming. Carrielynn currently sits on a number of provincial and national boards that deal with disability and healing.

Margaret MacCabe of Edmonton is currently conducting thesis research on sexual health of women with spinal cord injuries for a Masters of Science in the Health Promotion program at the University of Alberta. She is also actively involved in therapeutic recreation programs and health promotion for persons with disabilities.

Sandra Newhouse of Calgary is an active member in the Children's Hospital Aid Society. She has been involved as a volunteer member of many organizations in Alberta, including the Alberta Children's Health Foundation, Women in Need Society, Grace Hospital Foundation, and the Alberta Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled.

Council members, back row, left to right: George Schmidt, Lionel Remillard, Judy Hellevang, Patricia Pardo, Premier Ralph Klein, Anne Belohorec, Sandra Newhouse, Andrea Fugeman Millar, Gordon Bullivant and Gerald Gordey. Front row, left to right: Carrielynn Lamouche, Rob Lougheed (Chair), Jim Killick, Margaret MacCabe, Ruth Peterson, and Shirley Dupmeier.

Pat Pardo of Calgary holds a PhD in Educational Psychology with a specialization in disability and multicultural organizational change. She is currently the Coordinator of the Disability Resource Centre and an adjunct professor with the Community Rehabilitation Disability Studies Program and the Master of Teaching Program at the University of Calgary.

Ruth Peterson of Edmonton was a registered nurse who helped establish the first Cerebral Palsy Association of Alberta in the 1950s, and is a past president of the Easter Seals Ability Fund. She served as a board member of the Saskatchewan Council for the Disabled, as well as the Canadian Council of Rehabilitation and Work.

Lionel Remillard of Bonnyville has had a long career as an educator and has extensive experience working with persons with disabilities. He was the former Director of the Smoky River District Association for the Mentally Handicapped and former President of the Alberta Association for the Mentally Handicapped.

George Schmidt of High Level has served in many community service positions, including Councillor of the Town of High Level, and has held senior management positions in various health care organizations.

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